



CONNECTICUT STATE POLICE UNION

Good morning Senator Oston, Representative Walker, Senator Minor, Representative France and Distinguished Members of the Appropriations Committee.

My name is Andrew Matthews, the Executive Director of the Connecticut State Police Union and retired Sergeant with the Connecticut State Police. The State Police Union represents approximately 898 State Troopers, Sergeants and Master Sergeants and takes great pride in protecting all citizens, especially those who live and work in Connecticut.

We appreciate the opportunity to speak before you today. I am here to speak in **OPPOSITION** of:

PROPOSED BILL NO. 5149

AN ACT EXCLUDING REIMBURSEMENT TO STATE EMPLOYEES FOR MILEAGE AND PAYMENTS FOR OVERTIME FROM THE CALCULATION OF RETIREMENT INCOME

This Bill proposes to eliminate overtime from hourly employees' pension calculation and is an attack on State employees, many of whom risk their own lives to protect the lives of others. **This Bill also discriminates against those who are forced to work overtime because of the State's failure to properly staff State agencies and it fails to recognize the decades of concessions made by State employees to address concerns related to pension costs.** Moreover, the State can not have it both ways, you can either maintain the proper staffing levels to provide services to the public or by law, you must pay overtime to hourly employees and it shall count towards their pension calculation.

In 2009, the State Police employed 1283 sworn State Troopers. However, as of today, the State Police only has 898 Troopers. **The proponents of this Bill fail to acknowledge that the reduction of 385 State Troopers has resulted in an annual savings of over (\$57,000,000) fifty-seven million dollars for the State of Connecticut.** However, every year some of our legislators ignore the annual savings of each State agency and advocate the theory that State employees are somehow responsible for the State's failures, or that employees should not be fairly compensated for the countless hours they spend away from their families in order to fulfill their oath of office. Moreover, these legislators refuse to recognize that these same employees negotiated with the employer for these benefits and in exchange they are providing an invaluable service to the State of Connecticut and are putting themselves at great risk of illness, injury and even death each and every day. **It is disrespectful for these legislators to make proposals that violate the collective bargaining process, and it sends the message that hourly State employees are not valued or appreciated for their sacrifices beyond active service and into retirement.**

In 1984, 1997, 2011, and 2017, State employees have worked collaboratively with our elected leadership to reform the overall costs related to pension and healthcare benefits, which resulted in significant increases to pension and healthcare contributions and changes in the pension calculation formula. **Eliminating the practice of allowing overtime to be calculated in an hourly state employee's pension is discriminatory, illegal and offensive to those who risk their life.** Furthermore, it will affect the employer's ability to recruit and/or retain highly qualified employees who are willing to risk their lives performing hazardous duty responsibilities for the State of Connecticut. Rather than trying to eliminate benefits with legislative action, our legislators should respect the collective bargaining process and those that have given and/or are willing to give their life to defend others.

In closing, it is important for legislators and the public to know that not all overtime for Troopers is used in the pension calculation. **For example, the overtime for Highway Construction Projects (HCP) on our limited access highways, which is a significant amount of the overtime earned by Troopers, is not considered within the pension calculation.**

**Connecticut
State Police Union**

The State Police Union is committed to the theory of “a fair day’s work...for a fair day’s pay.” While respecting the employer, we believe in maintaining, improving, and protecting State employees benefits and working conditions. This should be a priority to everyone. ***We respect the collective bargaining process and do not support the elimination of overtime from pension calculations.*** The Appropriations Committee can send a strong message by rejecting this proposal, which would prove it respects collective bargaining and values every State employee for their sacrifices and service.

Based on the foregoing, we respectfully request the Committee not approve this proposed legislation.

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